

93
A
SERMON

Preach'd to the Honourable
House of Commons,

IN
PARLIAMENT
Assembled,

On JANUARY 31st, 16⁴⁸₄₉.

A Day of Solemn Humiliation.

By JOHN OWEN Pastor of the Church
of CHRIST which is at Coggeshall in
ESSEX.

LONDON,

Printed for JOSEPH MARSHALL at the
Bible in Newgate-street. 1720. 7

Die Mercuij 31 Januarij, 1648.

ORdered by the COMMONS Assembled
in Parliament, That Mr. Allen do give
the Thanks of this House to Mr. Owen, for
the great Pains he took in his Sermon preached
before this House this Day, at Margaret's West-
minster; And that he be Desired to Print his
Sermon at large, wherein he is to have the
like Privilege of Printing it, as others in the
like kind usually have had.

Hen. Scobell, Cler. Parl. Dom. Com.



To

To the Right Honourable
The Commons of *England*,
Assembled in Parliament.

S I R S,



I hath always suited the Wisdom of God, to do great things in difficult seasons: He sets up walls in troublous times, Dan. 9. 25. His Builders must hold Swords and Spears, as well as Instruments of Labour, Nebem. 4. 16. yea, while Sin continueth in its course Here, (which began in Heaven, and having contemporised with the Earth, shall live for ever in Hell.) Great Works for God, will cause great Troubles amongst Mⁿ. The holy, harmless Reconciler of Heaven and Earth, bids us expect the Sword, to attend his Undertakings for, and Way of making Peace, Mat. 10. 34. All the Waves in the World arise to their height and roaring, from the confronting of the breath of God's Spirit, and the Vapours of Mens Corruptions. Hence Seasons receive their degrees of difficulty, according to the greatness and weight of the Works which in them God will accomplish: to their worth and excellency is Mⁿ's opposition proportioned. This, the Instruments of his Glory in this Generation shall continually find true, to their present Trouble, and future Comfort.

* As the Day's approach for the delivery of the Decree, to the shaking of Heaven and Earth, and all the Powers of the World, Heb. 12. 26, 27. Dan. 7. 27. to make way for the

* Ego nisi tumultus istos viderem, verbum Dei in mundo non esse dicerem. Luth. def. A.

Establisb-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Establishment of that kingdom which shall not be given to another people, (the great Expectation of the Saints of the Most High, before the Consummation of All;) so Tumults, Troubles, Vexations, and Disquietness must certainly grow and encrease amongst the sons of Men.

A dead Woman (says the Proverb) will not be carried out of her House under four Men. Much less will living Men, of Wisdom and Power, be easily and quietly dispossessed of that share and interest of the things of Christ, which long continued Usurpation hath deluded them into an imagination of being their own Inheritance. This then being shortly to be effected, and the scale being ready to turn against the Man of Sin, notwithstanding his balancing it in opposition to the witness of Jesus, with the weight and poise of Earthly Power; no wonder if Heaven, Earth, Sea, and dry Land be shaken, in their giving place to the Things which cannot be moved, Isai. 34. 4, 5. Rev. 16. 16.

God Almighty having called you forth (Right Honourable) at his entrance, to the rolling up of the Nations Heavens like a Scroll, to serve him in your Generation in the High Places of Armageddon, you shall be sure not to want experience of that Opposition which is raised against the great Work of the Lord, which generally swells most against the visible Instruments thereof.

And would to God you had only the devoted sons of Babel to contend withal, that the Men of this shaking Earth were your only Antagonists; that the Malignity of the Dragon's Tail, Rev. 12. 4. had no Influence on the Stars of Heaven, to prevail with them to fight in their Courses against you. But, Jacta est alea, the Providence of God must be served, according to the discovery made of his own unchangeable Will, and not the mutable Interests and Passions of the sons of Men: For verily the Lord of hosts hath purposed to pollute the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth, Isai. 23. 9.

The Contradictions of Sinners against all that walk in the paths of righteousness and peace, with the supportment which their spirits may receive (as being promised) who pursue those ways, notwithstanding those contradictions, are in part discovered in the ensuing Sermon: The foundation of that whole Transaction of Things, which is therein held

The Epistle Dedicatory.

held out, in reference to the present Dispensations of Providence (being nothing but an entrance into the unravelling of the whole Web of Iniquity, interwoven of Civil and Ecclesiastical Tyranny, in opposition to the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus,) I chose not to mention. Neither shall I at present add any thing thereabout, but only my desire that it may be eyed as the granted Basis of the following Discourse. Only, by your very favourable acceptation of the making out those Thoughts, which were the hasty conception, and, like Jonah's Gourd, the child of a night or two, (which, with prayer for a rooting in the Hearts of them to whom they were delivered, had certainly withered in their own Leaves, had they not received warmth and moisture from your Commands in general, and the particular Desires of many of you, to give them a life of a few days longer,) I am encouraged to the annexing of a few Lines, as a Free-will Offering to attend the following Product of Obedience.

Now this shall not be to the Opposition which you do, and shall yet farther meet withal, but as to the causes real, or pretended, which are held forth as the bottom of that Contradiction wherewith on every side you are encompassed.

The Things in reference whereunto your ^{proceedence} is laden with such Criminations, as these sad days of recompence have found to be Comets portending no less than Blood, are first Civil, then Religious.

For the first, as their being beyond the bounds of my Calling, gives them sanctuary from being called forth to my consideration; so neither have I the least thoughts, with Absalom, of a more orderly carrying on Affairs, might my desires have any influence into their disposal. Waiting at the Throne of Grace, that those whom God hath intrusted with, and enabled for the Transaction of these Things, may be directed and supported in their Employment, is the utmost of my Undertaking herein.

For the other, or Religious Things, the general Interest I have in them as a Christian, being improved by the super-added Title of a Minister of the Gospel, (tho' unworthy the one Name, and the other) gives me not only such boldness as ascerueth from enjoyed Favour, but also such a Right as will support me to plead concerning them, before the most Impartial Judicature.

And

The Epistle Dedicatory.

*And this I shall do (as I said before) merely in reference to those C^ommunions which are laid by conjectural Presumptions on your Honourable Assembly, and made a cause of much of that opposition and contradiction you meet withal. Now in particular, it is the Toleration of all Religions * or invented ways of Worship, wherein your Constitutions are confidently Antidated in many Places of the Nation, the thing it self withal being held out as the most enormous apprehensions, and desperate Endeavour for the Destruction of Truth and Godliness, that ever entered the thoughts of Men professing the one and the other. The Contest hereabout being adhuc sub Iudice, and there being no doubt but that the whole Matter, commonly phrased as above, hath (like other things) sinful and dangerous Extreame; I deemed it not amiss, to endeavour the pouring a little cold water upon the common flames which are kindled in the breasts of Men about this thing. And who knows whether the words of a weak Nothing, may not, by the power of the Fountain of Beings, give some light into the Determination and Establishment of a Thing of so great Concernment and Consequence, as this is generally conceived to be. What is, in this my weak Undertaking, of the Lord, I shall beg of him that it may be received; what is of my self, I beg of you that it may be pardoned. That God Almighty would give you to prove All things that come unto you in his way, and to hold fast that which is good, granting you unconquerable Assistance in constant Perseverance, is the Prayer of,*

Your devoted Servant

Coggeshall,
Febr. 28.

in our dearest Lord,

John Owen.

* *Vid.* A Discourse about Toleration, &c.

A
S E R M O N
Preach'd to the Honourable
House of Commons,

JANUARY 31st, 1648-49.

J E R E M. xv. 19, 20.

*Let them return unto thee, but return not
thou unto them.*

*And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen
wall, and they shall fight against thee, but they shall
not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save
thee, and to deliver thee, saith the Lord.*



THE Words of my *Text* having a full
dependance upon, and flowing out from
the main Subject-Matter of the whole
Chapter; I must of necessity take a
view thereof, and hold out unto you
the Mind of God contained therein, be-
fore I enter upon the part thereof chiefly intended:
And this I shall do with very brief Observations, that
I may

I may not anticipate my self from a full *opening* and *application* of the words of my *Text*.

And *this* the rather are my Thoughts led unto, because the whole *Transaction* of Things between the Lord and a stubbornly-sinful Nation, exceedingly accommodated to the carrying on of the Controversy, he is now pleading with that wherein we live, is set out (as we say) to the *life* therein.

Of the whole Chapter, there be these five parts :

1. *The denunciation of fearful, wasting, destroying Judgments against Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 3, and so on to the 10th.*

2. *The procuring deserving Cause of these overwhelming Calamities, ver. 4, 6.*

3. *The Inevitableness of those Judgments, and the Inexorableness of the Lord, as to the Accomplishment of all the Evil denounced, ver. 1.*

4. *The State and Condition of the Prophet, with the frame and deportment of his spirit, under those bitter Dispensations of Providence, ver. 10, 15, 16, 17, 18.*

5. *The Answer and Appearance of God unto him, upon the making out of his Complaint, ver. 11, 12, 13, 14, — 19, 20, 21.*

My *Text* lieth in the last part, but yet with such dependance on the former, as inforceth to a consideration of them.

1. There is the denunciation of fearful, wasting, destroying *Judgments* to sinful *Jerusalem*, ver. 2, and so onwards, with some interposed *Ejaculations* concerning her inevitable *Ruin*, as ver. 5, 6.

Here's *Death*, *Sword*, *Famine*, *Captivity*, ver. 2. *Banishment*, ver. 4. *unpitied Desolation*, ver. 5. *redoubled Destruction*, *bereaving*, *fanning*, *spoiling*, &c. ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.

That

That Universal Devastation of the whole People, which came upon them in the *Babylonish Captivity*, is the Thing here intended; the Means of its Accomplishment by particular Plagues and Judgments, in their several kinds (for the greater Dread and Terror) being at large enumerated: The *Faithfulness* of God also being made hereby to shine more clear, in the *Dispersion* of that People; doing, not only for the main, what before he had threatned, but in particular, executing the Judgments recorded *Luke 26. 14, &c. Deut. 28. 15, &c. Fulfilling hereby what he had devised, accomplishing the word he had commanded in the days of old, Lam. 2. 17.*

That which hence I shall Observe, is only from the *variety* of these Particulars, which are held out as the Means of the intended Desolation.

Obf. 1.] *God's treasures of Wrath against a sinful People, have sundry and various Issues, for the Accomplishment of the appointed End.*

When God walks contrary to a People, it is not always in one path; he hath seven ways to do it, and will do it seven times, *Levit. 26. 24.* He strikes not always with one Weapon, nor in one Place. As there is with him *ποικίλη χάρις*, manifold and various Grace, *1 Pet. 4. 10.* Love and Compassion making out it self in choice variety suited to our manifold Indigencies; so there is *θεση τεινσωροσμένη*, *Rom. 2. 5.* stored, treasured Wrath, suiting it self in its flowings out, to the provocations of stubborn Sinners.

The first Emblem of God's Wrath against Man, was a flaming Sword turning it self every way, *Gen. 3. 24.* Not only in one or two, but in all their paths, he meeteth them with his flaming Sword.

As a wild beast in a net, *Isai. 51. 20.* so are Sinners under inexorable Judgments; the more they strive, the more they are enwrapt and entangled. They

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shuffle themselves from under one Calamity, and fall into another; *As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand upon the wall, and a serpent bit him*, Amos 5. 19. Oh, remove this one *Plague*! saith *Pharaoh*, Exod. 10. 17. If he can escape from under this *Pressure*, he thinks he shall be free: but, *when he fled from the lion, still the bear met him; and when he went into the house, the serpent bit him.*

And as the flaming *Sword* turns every way, so God can put it into every thing: To those that cry, *Give me a King*, God can give him in his *Anger*; and from those that cry, *Take him away*, he can take him away in his *Wrath*, Hos. 13. 10, 11.

Oh, that this might *seal up Instruction* to our own Souls! What *variety* of Calamities have we been exercised withal, for sundry Years! What *Pharaoh-like* spirits have we had under them? Oh, that we were delivered *this once*, and then all were well! How do we spend all our Thoughts, to extricate our selves from our present *Pressures*? If this *Hedge*, this *Pit* were passed, we should have smooth Ground to walk on; not considering that God can fill our safest Paths with Snares and Serpents: *Give us Peace; Give us Wealth; Give us*, as we were, with our own, in *Quietness*. Poor Creatures! suppose all these Desires were in Sincerity, and not, as with the most they are, fair Colours of foul and bloody Designs: Yet if Peace were, and Wealth were, and former Things were, and God were not, what would it avail you? Cannot he *poison* your Peace, and *canker* your Wealth? and when you were escaped out of the field from the *Lion and the Bear*, appoint a *Serpent to bite you, leaning upon the walls of your own house*? In vain do you seek to stop the Streams, while the Fountains are open; turn your selves whither you will,

will, bring your selves into what Condition you can, nothing but Peace and Reconciliation with God, of all these Judgments, can give you Rest in the day of Visitation. You see what variety of Plagues are in his hand: changing of Condition, will do no more to the avoiding them, than a Sick Man's turning himself from one side of the Bed to another; during his turning, he forgets his Pain, by striving to move; being lay'd down again, he finds his Condition the same as before: This is the *first* thing, we are under various Judgments, from which, by our selves, there is no Deliverance.

2. The *second* thing here express'd, is the procuring Cause of these various Judgments, set down *ver.* 4.

— because of *Manasseh son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem.*

The Sins of *Manasseh* fill'd the *Ephah* of *Judah's* Wickedness, and caused the talent of lead to be lay'd on the mouth thereof, *Zech.* 5. 7. Often-times, in the Relation of his Story, doth the *Holy Ghost* emphatically express this, that, *for his sin, Judah should surely be destroyed*, 2 King. 21. 11. Yea, when they had a little reviving under *Josiah*, and the bowels of the Lord began to work in Compassion towards them; yet as it were, remembring the Provocation of this *Manasseh*, he recalls his thoughts of Mercy, 2 King. 23. 26, 27. * The disposing of Divine and Human Things, is often-times very opposite: God himself proceeds with them in a diverse Dispensation. In the Spiritual Body, the *Members* offend, and the *Head* is punished; *The iniquity of us all did meet on him*, *Isai.* 53. In the Civil Politick Body, the *Head* offends, and the *Members* rue it; *Manasseh* sins, and *Judah* must go Captive.

* Est quædam æmulatio divina rei, & humanæ. Tertul. Apol.

Three Things present themselves for the Vindication of the *Equity* of God's righteous Judgments, in the recompensing the Sins of the King upon the People.

1. The *Concurrence and Influence* of the Peoples Power into their Rule and Government : They that set him up, may justly be called to answer for his Miscarriage. The Lord-himself had before made the sole bottom of that *Political Administration* to be their own Wills : *If thou wilt have a king, after the manner of the nations*, Deut. 17. 14. 1 Sam. 8. 7. though, for Particulars, Himself (according to his Supreme Sovereignty) placed in *many*, by peculiar Exemption; otherwise, his Providence was served by their plenary Consent, or by such Dispensation of Things as you have related, 1 Kings. 16. 21, 22. *Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts : half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king ; and half followed Omri. But the people that followed Omri, prevailed against the people that followed Tibni : so Tibni died, and Omri reigned.* Now they who place Men in Authority to be God's *Vicegerents*, do undertake to God for their Deportment in that Authority, and therefore may justly bear the sad Effects of their sinful Miscarriages.

2. Because, for fear of *Manasseh's* Cruelty, or to flatter him in his Tyranny for their own Advantage, the greatest part of the People had *apostatized* from the Ways and Worship of *Hezekiah*, to comply with him in his Sin : As, at another time, *they willingly walked after the commandment*, Hof. 5. 11. And this is plainly express'd, 2 King. 21. 9. *Manasseh seduced the people to do more evil than the nations.* When Kings turn Seducers, they seldom want great store of Followers : Now, *if the blind lead the blind, both will, and both justly may, fall into the ditch.* When Kings command unrighteous Things, and People
suit

suit them with willing Compliance, none doubts but the Destruction of them both is just and righteous. See *verse* 6. of this Chapter.

3. Because the People, by Virtue of their retained Sovereignty, did not restrain him in his provoking Ways. So *Zuinglius*, Artic. 42, *Qui non vetat, cum potest, jubet*: When *Saul* would have put *Jonathan* to death, the People would not suffer him so to do, but delivered *Jonathan* that he died not, 1 *Sam.* 14. When *David* purposed the reducing of the Ark, his Speech to the People was; *If it please you, let us send abroad to our brethren every where, that they may assemble themselves to us. And all the Congregation said that they would do so, because the thing was right in their eyes*, 2 *Chron.* 13. 2. So they bargain with *Rehoboam* about their Subjection, upon Condition of a moderate Rule, 1 *Kings* 12. By virtue of which Power also, they delivered *Jeremiah* from the Prophets and Priests that would have put him to Death, *Fer.* 26. 16. And on this Ground might justly feed on the Fruit of their own neglected Duty. See *Bilson* of *Obed.* Part 3. pag. 271.

Be it thus, or otherwise; by what Way soever the People had their Interest therein, certain it is, that for the Sins of *Manasseh*, one way or other made their own, they were destroyed: And therefore these things being written for our Example, it cannot but be of great Concernment to us, to know what were those Sins which wrapt up the People of God in irrevocable Destruction. Now these the Holy Ghost fully manifesteth in the Story of the Life and Reign of this *Manasseh*, and they may all be reduced unto two chief Heads.

1. False Worship or Superstition: *He built high places, made altars for Baal, and a grove, as did Ahab*, 2 *Kings*, 25. 2.

2. Cruelty. *He shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Ferusalem with blood, from one end of it to another, ver. 16.*

Whether this *Cruelty* be to be ascribed to his *Tyranny* in Civil Affairs, and so the Blood shed, is called *innocent*, because not of Malefactors; or to his *Persecution*, in subordination to his *false Worship*, instituted as before, (as the Pope and his Adherents have devoured whole Nations *in ordine ad spiritualia*) is not apparent: But this is from hence and other Places, most evident; * That *Superstition and Persecution, Will-worship, and Tyranny, are inseparable Concomitants.*

Nebuchadnezzar sets up his great Image, and the next News, you hear, *the Saints are in the Furnace, Dan. 3. 20.* You seldom see a Fabrick of *Humane-invented Worship*, but either the Foundation, or Top-stone, is laid in the Blood of God's People. *The wisdom* (Religion, or way of Worship) *that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable; gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisie, Jam. 3. 17.* when the other is *earthly, sensual, devilish, bringing along envying, strife, contention, and every evil work, ver. 16.* Persecution and Blood is the genuine product of all invented Worship. I might from hence name and pursue other *Observations*; but I shall only name one, and proceed.

[Obs.] *When false Worship, with Injustice by Cruelty, have possessed the Governors of a Nation, and wrapt in the Consent of the greatest part of the People, who have been acquainted with the Mind of God; that People and Nation, without unprecedented Mercy, is obnoxious to remediless Ruine.*

Those two are the *Bell and Dragon*, that what by their *Actings*, what by their *Deservings*, have swal-

* See a Discourse about *Toleration.*

lowed that Ocean of Blood, which hath flowed from the Veins of Millions of Millions slain upon the face of the Earth. Give me the Number of *the Witnesses of Jesus*, whose Souls under the Altar cry for Revenge against their false-worshipping Murtherers, Rev. 6. 9, 10. and the Tale of them, whose Lives have been sacrificed to the insatiable *Ambition* and *Tyranny* of Blood-thirsty Potentates, with the issues of God's just Vengeance on the Sons of Men, for compliance in these two things, and you will have gathered in the whole *Harvest of Blood*, leaving but a few stragling Gleanings upon other Occasions. And, if these things have been found in *England*, and the present Administration with sincere Humiliation do not run cross, to *unravel this close-woven Web* of Destruction, all thoughts of Recovery will quickly be too late. And thus far Sin and Providence drive on a Parallel.

3. The Inevitableness of the Desolation threatned, and the Inexorableness of God in the Execution of it, ver. 1. is the third thing considerable: *Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this People.*

Should I insist upon this, it would draw me out unto Scripture Evidences, of a Nation's *travelling in sin*, beyond the Line of God's Patience, and so not to be exempted from Ruine: But instead thereof, I shall make it a part of my daily Supplications, that they may be to our *Enemies*, if God's Enemies, and the interpretation of them to those that hate us.

In brief, the Words contain an impossible *Supposition*, and yet a *Negation* of the Thing for whose sake it is supposed. *Moses* and *Samuel* were Men, who in the days of their Flesh, offered up strong Supplications, and averted many imminent Judgments from a sinful People: As if the Lord should say, All that I can do in such a Case as this, I would grant

at the Intercession of *Moses* and *Samuel*, or others interceding in their Spirit and Zeal: But now the state of Things is come to that pass, the time of Treaty being expired, the black Flag hung out, and the *decree having brought forth*, Zeph. 2. 2. that upon their utmost Intreaty, it cannot, it shall not be reversed.

Obf.] *There is a Time when Sin grows ripe for ruine: For three transgressions, and for four, the Lord will not turn away the iniquity of a people, Amos 1. 9. When the Sin of the Amorites hath filled the Cup of Vengeance, they must drink it, Gen. 15. 16. England, under several Administrations of Civil Government, hath fallen twice, yea, thrice, into Nation-destroying Sins: Providence hath once more given it another Bottom; if you should stumble (which the Lord avert) at the same Block of Impiety and Cruelty, there is not another sitting to be made to reserve any Grains from the Ground: I doubt not but our three Transgressions, and four, will end in total Desolation; the Lord be your Guide, poor England lieth at Stake.*

Obf.] *The greatest Difficulty that lieth in bringing of total Destruction upon a sinful People, is in the interposition of Moses and Samuel: If Moses would but have stood out of the Gap, and let the Almighty go, he had broken in upon the whole Host of Israel, Exod. 32. 9, 10. And let it, by the way, be observed of the Spirit of Samuel, that when the People of God were most exorbitant, he crieth, As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you, 1 Sam. 12, 23. Scarce answered by those, who if their Interest be not served, or at best, their Reason satisfied, will scarce yield a Prayer for, yea, pour out Curses against their choicest Deliverers. The Lord lay it not to their charge; For us, seeing that praying Deliver-*

ers are more prevalent than fighting Deliverers (it is, though Moses and Samuel, not Gideon and Sampson, stood before me) as some decay, let us gather strength in the Lord, that he may have never the more rest for their giving over, until he establish mount Zion a praise in the earth.

4. Come we now to the Fourth thing in this Chapter; the Prophet's State and Condition, with the frame and deportment of his Heart and Spirit under these Dispensations; and here we find him expressing two things of himself.

1. What he found from others, ver. 10.

2. What he wrestled withal in his own spirit, ver. 15, 16, 17, 18.

1. What he found from others, he telleth you, it was Cursing and Reproach, &c. I have neither lent on usury, nor have men lent to me on usury, yet every one of them doth curse me, ver. 10.

Now this return may be considered two ways;

1. In it self, Every one (saith he) of this people curse me.

2. In reference to his Deportment: I have neither borrowed nor lent on usury, yet they curse me.

From the First, Observe:

Obs.] Instruments of God's greatest Works and Glory, are often-times the chiefest Objects of a professing Peoples Curses and Revenges. The return which God's Labourers meet withal in this Generation, is in the number of those things whereof there is none new under the Sun. Men, that under God, deliver a Kingdom, may have the Kingdom's Curses for their pains.

When Moses had brought the People of Israel out of Bondage, by that wonderful and unparallel'd Deliverance, being forced to appear with the Lord, for the Destruction of Corah and his Associates, who would have

have seduced the *Congregation* to its utter Ruine, he receives at length this reward of all his Travail, Labour and Pains; *All the congregation gather'd themselves against him and Aaron, laying murder and sedition to their charge, telling them they had killed the people of the Lord*, Num. 16. 41, 42. A goodly Reward for all their Travails. If God's Works do not suit with the *Lusts, Prejudices, and Interests* of Men, they will labour to give his Instruments the *Devil's Ways*. Let not upright Hearts sink, because they meet with thankless Men, *Bona agere, & mala pati Christianorum est*. A Man may have the *Blessing* of God, and the *Curse* of a professing People at the same time. *Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel*, Isa. 8. 15. * *Cum ab hominibus damnatur, à Deo absolvimur*: Man's *Condemnation* and God's *Absolution*, do not seldom meet upon the same Persons, for the same Things: If you labour to do the Work of the Lord, pray think it not strange, if among Men, Curses be your Reward, and Detestation your Wages.

2. In reference to the Prophet's Deportment, he had neither lent, nor had any lent to him upon Usury; he was free from blame among them, had no dealings with them in those things which are usually attended with Reproaches, as he shews by an Instance in Usury, a thing that a long time hath heard very ill.

Obf.] Men every way blameless, and to be embraced in their own Ways, are often-times abhorred and laden with Curses, for following the Lord in his Ways. *Bonus vir Cajus sejus, sed malus quia Christianus*; What precious Men should many be, would they let

* Tert. Apol.

go the Work of God in this Generation? No Advantage against them, but in the matter of their God, and that is enough to have them to the *Lions, Dan.* 6. 5. He that might be honoured for compassing the *Ends* suiting his own *Worldly Interest*, and will cheerfully undergo Dishonour for going beyond to suit the Design of God, hath surely some *Impression* upon his Spirit that is from Above.

2. You have the Prophet's Deportment, and the frame of his Spirit, during those Transactions between the Lord and that sinful People: And this he holds out in many pathological Complaints; to be *fainting, decaying, perplexed, weary of his burden*, not knowing how to ease himself, as you may see at large, *ver.* 15, 16, 17, 18.

Obf.] *In dark and difficult dispensations of Providence, God's choicest Servants are often-times ready to faint under the burthen of them.* How weary was David, when he cried out in such a condition, *O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flie away and be at rest*, *Psal.* 55. 6. Long had he waited for a desired *issue* of his perplexed State, and had perhaps often-times been frustrated of his *hope* of drawing to a period of his Miseries; and now finding one *disappointment* to follow on the neck of another, he is weary, and cries, What, nothing but this Trouble and Confusion still? *Oh that I had Wings like a Dove*; a Ship to sail to a foreign Nation (or the like) there to be at peace. In the like Strait another time, see what a miserable Conclusion he draws, of all his being Exercised under the Hand of God, *Psal.* 73. 13. *Verily I have cleansed my heart in VAIN, and washed my hands in innocency.* And again, *Psal.* 116. 11. he saith, in the Perturbation of his Mind, *All men are liars*; That all the Promises, all the Encouragements, which

which in his way he had received from God, should fail of their Accomplishment.

It is not with *them*, as it was with that *wicked King of Israel*, who being disappointed of Peace and Deliverance in his own time, cries out, *This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait upon him any longer?* 2 Kings, 16. 33. The *season* of Deliverance suited not his *expectation*; therefore he quite throweth off the Lord, and his Protection: Not unlike many among our selves, whose Desires and Expectations being not satisfied in the *closing* of our Distractions, according to the way which themselves had framed for the Lord to walk in, are ready to cast off his *Cause*, his Protection, to comply with the Enemies of his Name; *Si Deus homini non placuerit, Deus non erit*: But it may be observed, that Deliverance came not to that People, until *Jehoram* was weary of waiting, and then instantly God gives it in: When God tireth the *Patience* of corrupted Men, he will speak *Peace* to them that wait for him.

Thus is it not with the Saints of God, only being *perplexed* in their Spirits, *dark* in their Apprehensions, and *fainting* in their Strength; they brake out oft times into passionate Complaints (as *Jeremy* for a Cottage in the Wilderness,) but yet for the main holding firm to the Lord: And the Reasons of this quailing, are;

1. *The weakness of Faith, when the methods of God's Proceedings are unfathomable to our Apprehensions*: While Men see the Paths wherein the Lord walketh, they can follow him through some Difficulties; but when that is hid from them, though Providence so shut up all other Ways, that it is impossible God should be in them, yet if they cannot discern (*so proud are they*) how he goeth in that wherein he is, they
are

are ready to faint and give over. God is pleased sometime to make Darknes his Pavillion and his secret Place; *A fire devours before him, and it is very tempestuous round about him*, Psal. 50. 3. When once God is attended with Fire, Darknes, and Tempest, because we cannot so easily see him, we are ready to leave him. Now this the Lord usually doth in execution of his Judgments: *Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep*, Psal. 36. 6. His *Righteousness*, his Kindnes is like a great *Mountain*, that is easy to be seen; a Man cannot overlook it, unless he wilfully shut his Eyes; *But his Judgments are like the great Deep*: Who can look into the bottom of the Sea, or know what is done in the depths thereof? God's Works in their accomplishment, are oftentimes so unsuited to the Reasons and Apprehensions of Men, that very many who have been strong in Desires, and great in Expectation of them, upon their bringing forth to light, have quite rejected and opposed them as none of his, because distant from what they had framed to themselves. It is evident from the Gospel, that the People of the *Jews* were full of expectation and longing, for the great Work of the coming of the *Messias*, just at the season wherein he came; yet being come, because not accommodated to their *pre-imaginations*, they rejected him, *as having neither form nor comeliness in him to be desired*, Isa. 53. 2. And the Prophet Amos telleth many, *who desired the day of the Lord, that that day should be darkness to them, and not light*, Amos 5. 18, 20. So in every Generation, many Desirers of the Accomplishment of God's Work, are shaken off from any share therein, by finding it unsuited to their Reasons and Expectations.

Now when the Lord is pleased thus to *walk in Darknes*, many being not able to *trace* him in his
Dispen-

Dispensations, are ready to lie down and sink under the burden: *David* seems to profess, that he had nothing, at such a time, to uphold him but this, that God must be there, or no where: *I had said* (saith he) *that it was in vain to walk as I do, but that I should have condemned the generation of thy children*, Psal. 73. 15. And truly, God never leaves us without so much *Light*, but that we may see clearly *where he is not*; and so by recounting Particulars, we may be rolled *where he is*, tho' his goings there be not so clear. Ask if God be in the Counsels of Men who seek themselves, and in the Ways of those who make it their design to ruine the Generation of the Just. If you find him there, seek no further; if not, let that give you *light* to discern *where he makes his abode, that you turn not aside to the flocks of others*.

2. A reducing the Works of Providence to inbred Rules of our own. But this I cannot pursue.

Use.] *Be tender toward Fainters in difficult Seasons*; if they leave waiting on the Lord, because the *Evil is of him*; if they cast in their Lot with the portion of the ungodly, they will, in the End, perish in their Gainsaying: But as for such, as what for want of *Light*, what for want of *Faith*, sit down and sigh in Darkness, be not too hasty in laying further *Burdens* on them. When first the *Confederacy* was entred into by the Protestant Princes in Germany, against *Charles* the Fifth, *Luther* himself, for a season, was bewildred, and knew not what to do, until being instructed in the Fundamental Laws of the Empire, he fate down fully in that Undertaking, though the Lord gave it not the desired Issue; *Sleid. Com. Lib. 8.* Our Saviour *Christ* asks, *If when he comes, he shall find Faith on the Earth?* Luke 18. 8. It is his coming with the *Spirit of Judgment and Burning*, a day of Trial and Visitation, he there speaks of. Now what *Faith* shall he

he want, which will not be found in that Day? Not the Faith of *adherence* to himself for spiritual Life and Justification, but of *actual* closing with him in the things he then doth; that shall be rare, many shall be staggered, and faint in that Day.

And thus, by the several Heads of this Chapter, have I led you through the very State and Condition of this Nation at this Time.

First, *Variety of Judgments* are threatned to us, and incumbent on us, as in the first Part. Secondly, Of these, *False-worship, Superstition, Tyranny, and Cruelty*, lie in the bottom, as their procuring Causes; which is the second. Thirdly, These, *if renewed under your band*, will certainly bring inevitable Ruine upon the whole Nation; which is the third. Fourthly, *All which make many precious Hearts, what for want of Light, what for want of Faith, to fail, and cry out for the Wings of a Dove*; which is the fourth. I come in the Fifth place, to God's Direction to you for the Future, in this State and Condition; which being spread in divers Verses, as the Lord gives it to the Prophet, I shall meddle with no more of it than is contained in the words which, at our entrance, I read unto you.

Let them return, &c.

In the Words observe four things;

1. God's *Direction* to the Prophet, and in him, to all that do his Work in such a season as this described: *Let them return to thee, return not thou to them.*

2. Their Assistance and Supportment in pursuance of that Direction: *I will make thee, to this people, a brasen fenced wall.*

3. The Opposition, with its Success and Issue, which in that way, they should meet withal: *They shall fight against thee, and shall not prevail.*

4. Their

4. Their Consolation and Success from the Presence of the Lord : *For I am with thee to deliver thee, &c.*

1. There is God's Direction.

Many Difficulties in this troublesome season, was the *Prophet* intricated withal : The *People* would not be *prevailed* with to come up to the Mind of God ; they continuing in their *stubbornness*, the Lord would not be *prevailed* with to avert the threatned Desolation : What now shall he do ? To stand out against the *balk of the People*, suits not his Earthly Interest ; to couple with them, answers not the discharge of his Office ; to wait upon them any longer, is fruitless ; to give up himself to their ways, comfortless. Hence his Complaints, hence his Moanings. Better lie down and sink under the Burden, than always to swim against the Stream of an unreformable Multitude. In this Strait, the Lord comes in with his Direction, *Let them return unto thee, &c.* Keep thy Station, perform thy Duty, comply not with the *Children of Backsliding* ; but whatever be the *issue*, if there be any *closing* wrought, let it be by working them off from their ways of Folly. *All Condescension* on thy part, where the Work of God is to be done, is in opposition to him : If they *return*, embrace them freely ; if not, do thy *Duty constantly*.

That which is spoken immediately to the *Prophet*, I shall hold out to All, acting in the Name and Authority of God, in this general Proposition.

Obf.] *Plausible Compliances of Men in Authority, with those against whom they are employed, are treacherous Contrivances against the God of Heaven, by whom they are employed.*

If God be so provoked that he curseth him who doth his Work negligently, what is he by them that do it treacherously ? When he gives a *Sword* into the Hands of Men, and they thrust it into his own *Bowels*,

els, his Glory and Honour, those things so dear to him? He that is intrusted with it, and dares not do *Justice* on every one that dares do *Injustice*, is afraid of the Creature, but makes very bold with the Creator.

Prov. 25. 2. *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but it is the glory of a king to find out a matter.* That which God aimeth to be *glorious* in, to manifest his *Attributes* by, is *the concealing and covering our Iniquities* in Christ; but if the *Magistrate* will have Glory, if he will not bring upon himself *Dishonour* by dishonouring of God, he is to search and find out the *Transgressions*, with whose Cognizance he is entrusted, and to give unto them condign Retribution. If the Lord Curse them *who come not forth to his help against the mighty*, Judg. 5. 23. What is their due, who being called forth by him, do yet *help the mighty against him*? For a Man to take part with the *Kingdom's Enemies*, is no small Crime; but for a *Commission-Officer* to run from them by whom he is *Commissioned*, to take part with the Adversary, is Death, without Mercy: Yet, have not some, in our days, arriv'd at that stupendous *Impudence*, that when as private Persons, they have declaimed against the *Enemies* of the Nation, and by that means got themselves into *Authority*, they have made use of that *Authority* to comply with, and uphold those, by an *Opposition* to whom, they got into their *Authority*: Which is no less than an *Atheistical* attempt to Personate the Almighty, unto such Iniquities, as, without his Appearance, they dare not own. But, *he that justifieth the wicked, and condemneth the just, are both an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. 17. 15. and not only to the Lord, but to Good Men also. *He that saith to the wicked, thou art righteous, him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him*, Prov. 24. 24.

I speak only as to the General, (for me, let all Particulars find Mercy) with a *sad Remembrance* of the late workings of Things amongst us, with those vile sordid *Compliances* which grew upon the Spirits of *Magistrates* and *Ministers*, with those, whose Garments were dyed with the Blood of God's Saints and precious Ones, (as formerly they were called, for now these Names are become Terms of Reproach;) and would this *Complying* went alone; but Pretences and Accusations, must be found out against such as fellow with them, when they they begin to call *Darkness*, *Light*; they will, e're long, call *Light*, *Darkness*: By which means, our Eyes have seen Men, of their own accord, laying down the *Weapons* wherewith at at first they fought against Opposers, and taking up *them* which were used against themselves, as hath hapned, more than once, to *Pen-men*, both in our own, and our Neighbour Nation. Now, this revolting from Principles of Religion and Righteousness, to a compliance with any sinful Way or Person, is a Treacherous Opposition to the God of Heaven; for,

1. It cannot be done, but by preferring the *creature* before the *Creator*, especially in those things which are the proximate Causes of Deviation.

Two principal Causes I have observed, of this crooked Walking.

1. Fear.

2. That Desire of perishing Things, which hath a mixture of *Covetousness* and *Ambition*. The first maketh Men *wary* what they do against Men; the other maketh them *weary* of doing any thing for God, as whereby their sordid Ends are not like to be accomplished.

1. Fear. When once Magistrates begin to listen after *quid sequitur's*, and so to withdraw from *doing Good*,

Good, for Fear of suffering Evil, paths of Wickedness are quickly returned unto, and the Authority of God despised. Let this man go, and take heed of Cesar, John 19. 12. did more prevail on Pilat's treacherous Heart, than all the other Clamours of the Jews; yea, was not the whole Sanhedrim swayed to desperate Villany, for fear the Romans should come and take away their kingdom? John 11. 48. When Men begin once to distrust that God will leave them in the Briers, to wrestle it out themselves, (for Unbelief lieth at the bottom of carnal Fear) they quickly turn themselves to Contrivances of their own, for their own Safety, their own Prosperity; which commonly is, by obliging those unto them by Compliances, in an Opposition to whom, they might oblige the Almighty to their Assistance: Surely they conclude, he wants either Truth or Power, to support them in his Employment.

If a Prince should send an Ambassador to a Foreign State, to treat about Peace, or to denounce War, who, when he comes there, distrusting his Master's Power, to make good his Undertaking, should comply, and wind up his Interest with them to whom he was sent, suffering his Sovereign's Errand to fall to the Ground, would he not be esteem'd as errant a Traitor as ever lived? And yet, though this be clipt Coin among Men, it is put upon the Lord every day as current.

From this Principle of carnal Fear and Unbelief, trembling for a man that shall die, and the son of man that shall be as grass, forgetting the Lord our maker, Isa. 51. 12. are all those prudential Follies, which exercise the Minds of most Men in Authority, making them, especially in times of Difficulties, to regulate and square all their Proceedings, by what suits their own Safety and particular Interests, Counselling, Advising, Working for themselves, quite forgetting

by whom they are entrusted, and whose Business they should do.

2. A Desire of Perishing Things, tempered with Covetousness and Ambition: Hence was the sparing of the fat Cattle, and of *Agag*, by *Saul*, 1 Sam. 15. When those two *Qualifications* close on any, they are diametrically opposed to that Frame which, of God, is required in them, *viz. That they should be Men fearing God, and bating Covetousness*. The first will go far, being only a Contrivance for Safety; but if this latter take hold of any, being a Consultation to *Exalt* themselves, it quickly carrieth them beyond all Bounds whatsoever. The Lord grant, that hereafter there may be no such Complaints in this *Nation*, or may be Causeless, as have been heretofore, *viz. That we have poured out our Prayers, jeopardized our Lives, wasted our Estates, spent our Blood, to serve the Lusts, and compass the Designs of ambitious ungodly Men*.

The many ways whereby these things intrench upon the spirits of Men, to byass them from the Paths of the Lord, I shall not insist upon; it is enough that I have touched upon the obvious Causes of Deviation, and manifested them to be Treacheries against the God of all Authority.

Use.] Be exhorted to beware of *Relapses*, with all their Causes and Inducements, and to be constant to the way of *Righteousness*: And this I shall hold out unto you in two Particulars.

1. Labour to Recover others, even all that were ever distinguished and called by the Name of the Lord, from their late fearful *Returning* to sinful *Compliances* with the Enemies of God and the Nation: I speak not of Men's *Persons*, but of their *Ways*: For three Years this People have been eminently *sick* of the folly of *Backsliding*, and without some *special Cordial*, are like to perish in it, as far as I know.

Look

Look upon the *State* of this People, as they were differenced seven Years ago, so for some continuance, and as they are now, and you shall find in how many things we have *returned* to others, and not one Instance to be given of their return to us: That this may be clear, take some Particulars.

1. In *Words and expressions*; those are *index animi*: Turn them over, and you may find what is in the whole Heart. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* Now is not that *Language*, are not those very *Expressions*, which filled the Mouths of the common Adversaries only, grown also terms of *Reproach* upon the Tongues of Men that suffered sometimes under them, and counted it their Honour so to do? Hence that common *Exprobation*; A Parliament of *Saints*, An Army of *Saints*, and such-like Derisions of God's ways, now plentiful with them, *who sate sometimes, and took sweet counsel with us*: Ah! had it not been more for the *Honour* of God, that we had kept our Station, until others had come to us, so to have exalted the Name and Profession of the *Gospel*, than that we should so return to them, as to joyn with them in making the Paths of Christ a *Reproach*? *Had it not been better for us, with Judah, to continue ruling with God, and to be faithful with the saints,* Hof. 11. 12. *than to stand in the congregation of the mockers, and to sit in the seat of the scornful?* What shall we say, when the Saints of God are as *signs and wonders to be spoken against in Israel?* Isa. 8. 18. O that Men would remember how they have *left* their first *Station*, when themselves use those *Reproaches* unto others, which for the same Cause themselves formerly bare with Comfort! It is bitterness to consider, how the Gospel is scandalized by this woful *Return* of Ministers and People, by casting *Scriptural Expressions* by way of scorn, on those, with whom they were
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Sometimes, in the like kind, Companions of Contempt. Surely, in this we are *Returned* to them, and not they to us.

2. In *Actions*: And those,

1. Of *Religion*; not only in *Opinion*, but *Practice* also, are we here under a vile *Return*: We are become the *Lyons*, and the very same Thoughts entertained by us against others, as were exercised towards our selves. Are not others as unworthy to live upon their Native Soil, in our *Judgments*, as we our selves in the *Judgments* of them formerly over us? Are not *Groans* for *Liberty*, by the warmth of Favour, in a few Years, hatched into *Attempts* for *Tyranny*? And for *Practice*; what hold hath former Superstition, in observing *Days* and *Times*, laid upon many of the *People* again! witness the late solemn Superstition, and many things of the like Nature.

2. For *Civil things*; The closing of so many, formerly otherwise engaged with the adverse Party in the late *Rebellion*, with the luke-warm Deporment of others at the same time, is a sufficient demonstration of it. And may not the Lord justly complain of all this, *What iniquity have you seen in me, or my ways, that you are gone far from me, and walked after vanity, and are become vain?* Jer. 2. 4. *Why have you changed your glory for that which doth not profit?* ver. 11. *Have I been a dry beath, or a barren wilderness to you?* Oh that Men should find no more sweetness in following the *Lamb* under wonderful *Protections*, but that they should thus turn aside into every *Wilderness*! What *Indignity* is this to the *Ways* of God? I could give you many *Reasons* of it, but I have done what I intended; a little hinted, that we are a *Returning People*, that so you might be exhorted to help for a *Recovery*: And how shall that be?

2. By your own *keeping close* to the Paths of Righteousness; if you *Return* not, others will look about again: This Breach, this Evil is of you, within your own Walls was the Fountain of our *Backsliding*. Would you be the *Repairers of Breaches*, the *Restorers of Paths* for Men to walk in, do these two things.

1. *Turn* not to the Ways of such as the Lord hath blasted under your Eyes, and these may be referred to three Heads.

1. *Oppression*.

2. *Self-seeking*.

3. *Contrivances for Persecution*.

1. *Oppression*: How detestable a Crime it is in the Eyes of the Almighty; what Effects it hath upon Men, *making wise men mad*, Eccl. 7. 7. How frequently it closeth in the calamitous Ruine of the Oppressors themselves, are things known to all. Whether it hath not been exercised in this Nation, both in *General*, by unnecessary Impositions; and in *Particular*, by unwarrantable Pressures, let the mournful *Cries* of all sorts of People testify. Should you now *Return* to such Ways as these, would not the Anger of the Lord smite against you? Make it, I beseech you, your *Design* to relieve the Whole, by all Means possible, and and to relieve Particulars, yea, even of the *adverse Party*, where too much over-borne. Oh let it be considered *by you*, that it may not be considered *upon you*: I know the Things you are necessitated to, are not to be supported by the Air. It is only what is *unnecessary* as to you, or *insupportable* as to Oaths, that requires your speedy Reforming; that so it may be said of you as of *Nehemiah*, chap. 5. 14, 15. And for Particulars, (pray pardon my Folly and Boldness) I heartily desire a Committee of your Honourable House might sit once a Week, to relieve poor Men

that have been Oppressed by Men sometimes enjoying Parliamentary Authority.

2. *Self-seeking*: When Men can be content to lay a *Nation low*, that they may *set up* themselves upon the Heaps and Ruines thereof. Have not some sought to Advance themselves under that Power, which, with the Lives and Blood of the People, they have opposed? Seeming to be *troubled* at former things, not because they were *done*, but because they were not *done by them*? But *innocent Blood* will be found a tottering Foundation for Men to build their Honours, Greatness, and Preferments upon. O *Return* not in this unto any. If Men *serve themselves* of the Nation, they must expect that the Nation will *serve it self* upon them. The best Security you can possibly have that the *People* will perform their Duty in Obedience, is the Witness of your own Consciences, that you have discharged *your Duty* towards them, in seeking *their Good*, by *your own Trouble*, and not *your own Advantages* in their Trouble. I doubt not, but that in this, your Practice makes the Admonition a Commendation, otherwise the Word spoken, will certainly Witness against you.

3. *Contrivances for Persecution*. How were the Hearts of all Men hardened, like the neather Mill-stone, and their Thoughts did grind Blood and Revenge against their Brethren! What Colours, what Pretences had Men invented, to prepare a way for the *rolling of their Garments in the Tears*, yea, the Blood of Christians! The Lord so keep your Spirits from a compliance herein, that withal the Bow be not too much bent on the other side, which is not impossible.

Be there a Backsliding upon your Spirit to these, or such-like things as these, the Lord will walk contrary to you; and *were you as the Signet upon his Hand*, he will pluck you off.

2. *Return not to the open Enemies of our Peace.* I could here enlarge my self, to support your Spirits in the Work I mentioned, *John* 29. 14, 15. but I must on to the following Parts of my Text, and pass from the *Direction* given, to the *Supportment* and *Assistance* promised; *I will make thee unto this people a brasen and a fenced wall.*

An implied *Objection*, which the Prophet might put in, upon his Charge to keep so close to the Rule of Righteousness, is here remov'd. If I must thus abide by it, to execute whatsoever the Lord calls me out unto, not shrinking nor staggering at the greatest Undertakings, what will become of me in the Issue? will it not be destructive to stand out against a confirmed People? No, saith the Lord, it shall not be; *I will make thee, &c.*

Obf.] God will certainly give in prevailing Strength, and unconquerable Defence, unto Persons constantly discharging the Duties of Righteousness, especially when undertaken in times of Difficulty and Opposition. *I will make thee, &c.* The like Engagement to this, you have made to *Ezekiel*, chap. 3. 8, 9. Neither was it so to the Prophets alone, but to Magistrates also. When *Joshua* undertook the Regency of *Israel* in a difficult time, God takes off his Fear and Diffidence, with this very Encouragement, *Josh.* 1. 5. He saith, He will make them a Wall, the best Defence against Opposition; and that not a weak tottering Wall, that might easily be cast down, but a brasen Wall, that must needs be impregnable: What Engines can possibly prevail against a Wall of Brass? And to make it more secure, this brasen Wall shall be fenced with all manner of Fortifications, and Ammunition; so that the veriest Coward in the World, being behind such a Wall, may, without Dread or Terror, apply himself to that which he findeth to do. God will so secure
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the Instruments of his Glory against a *Backsliding People*, in holding up the ways of his Truth and Righteousness, that all *Attempts* against them shall be vain, and the most timorous Spirit may be secure, provided he go not out of the Lord's Way; for if they be found beyond the *Line*, the *brazen Wall*, they may easily be Surprized. And indeed, who but a *Fool* would run from the shelter of a *brazen Wall*, to hide himself in a *little Stubble*? And yet so do all who run to their own Wisdom, from the most hazardous Engagement that any of the Ways of God can possibly lead them unto. It is a sure Word, and for ever to be rested upon, which the Lord gives in to *Asa*, 2 *Chron.* 15. 2. *The Lord is with you, while ye be with him.* An *unbiaſſed Magistracy* shall never want God's continued Presence: Very *Jeroboam* himself receives a Promise, upon Condition of close walking with God in righteous Administrations, of having *an house built him like the house of David*, 1 *Kings* 11. 38. What a Wall was God to *Moses* in that great Undertaking, of being instrumental for the delivery of *Israel* from a Bondage and Slavery of four hundred Years continuance? *Pharaoh* was against him, whom he had deprived of his *Sovereignty* and Dominion over the People: And what a Provocation the *depriving of Sovereignty* is unto Potentates, needs no demonstration: To the *corruption* of Nature, which inclines to *Heights* and Exaltations, in imitation of the Fountain whence it flows; they have also the *corruption* of State and Condition, which hath always enclined to Absoluteness and Tyranny: All *Aegypt* was against him, as being by him visibly Destroyed, Wasted, Spoiled, Robbed; and at length smitten in the *Apple of the Eye*, by the loss of their First-born; and, if this be not enough, that the King and People whom he opposed, were his Enemies; the very People, for whose sakes he set himself to oppose
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the others, they also rise up against him, yea, seek to destroy him; one time they *appeal to God for Justice against him*, *Exod. 5. 21. The Lord look upon you and judge.* They appeal to the righteous God to Witness, that he had not fulfilled what he promised them, to wit, Liberty, Safety, and freedom from Oppression, but that rather by his means their Burdens were encreased: And in this they were so confident (like some amongst us) that they appeal unto God for the Equity of their Complaints. Afterwards, being reduced to a *Strait*, such as they could not see how possibly they should be *extricated from*, without utter *Ruine* (like our present Condition, in the apprehension of some) they cry out upon him, for the whole design of bringing them into the Wilderness, and affirm positively, that though they had perished in their former Slavery, it had been better for them, than to have followed him in this new and dangerous Engagement, *Ex. 14. 11, 12, 13.* That * *Generation* being (as *Calvin* observes) so inured to *Bondage*, that they were altogether unfit to bear with the *workings* and pangs of their approaching Liberty. Afterwards, do they want Drink? *Moses* is the Cause: Did they want Meat? this *Moses* would starve them, *Exod. 15. 24. & 16. 7.* He could not let them alone by the *Flesh-pots of Egypt*; for this they are ready to Stone him, *Exod. 17. 3.* At this day, have we too much *Rain*, or too short a *Harvest*, it is laid on the Shoulders of the present Government: It was no otherwise of Old. At length this People came to that height, as being frightened by the Opposition they heard of, and framed to themselves in that Place whither *Moses* would carry them, that they presently

* *Calv. in Num. cap. 4.*

enter into a *Conspiracy* and *Revolt*, consulting to cast off his Government, and choose new Commanders, and with a violent Hand to return to their former Condition, *Num.* 14. 4. an attempt as frequent as fruitless among our selves. When this would not do, at length, upon the occasion of taking off *Corah* and his Company, they assemble themselves together, and lay (not Imprisonment, but) *murder* to his charge, and *that of the people of the Lord*, *Num.* 16. 41. Now, what was the issue of all those Oppositions? What Effect had they? How did the Power of *Pharaoh*, the Revenge of *Ægypt*, the Backsliding of *Israel* prevail? Why God made this one *Moses* a fenced *brass Wall* to them All, he was never in the least measure prevailed against; so long as he was with God, God was with him, no matter who was against him.

One thing only would I commend to your Considerations, *viz.* that this *Moses*, thus Preserved, thus Delivered, thus Protected, falling into *one* Deviation in *one* thing, from close following the Lord, was taken off from enjoying the *closure* and fruit of all his Labour, *Numb.* 20. 12. Otherwise he followed the Lord in a *difficult Season*, and did not want *unconquerable supportment*: Take heed of the smallest turning aside from God: Oh, lose not the fruit of all your Labour, for *self*, for a *lust*, or any thing that may turn you aside.

Now, the Lord will do this,

1. Because of his own *Engagement*.

2. For our *Encouragement*.

1. Because of his own *Engagement*, and that is two-fold,

1. Of *Truth and Fidelity*.

2. Of *Honour and Glory*.

1. His Truth and Veracity is engaged in it. *Those that honour him, he will honour*, 1 Sam. 2. 30. If Men honour him with *Obedience*, he will honour them with

with *Preservation*: He will be with them, while they are with him, 2 Chron. 15. 2. While they are with him in constancy of Duty, he will be with them, to keep them in Safety; He will never leave them, nor forsake them, Josh. 1. 5. No weapon that is framed against them shall prosper, Isa. 54. 17. Now God is never as the waters that fail to any that upon his Engagements wait for him; he will not shame the Faces of them that put their Trust in him. Why should our unbelieving Spirits charge that upon the God of Truth, which we dare not impute to a Man that is a Worm, a Lyar? Will a Man fail in his Engagement unto him, who upon that Engagement undertakes a difficult Employment for his sake? The Truth is, it is either want of Sincerity in our working, or want of Faith in dependance, that makes us at any time come short of the utmost tittle that is in any of the Lord's Engagements.

1. We want *Sincerity*, and do the Lord's Work, but with our own *Aims* and *Ends*, like *Jehu*; no wonder if we be left to our selves for our Wages and Defence.

2. We want *Faith* also in the Lord's Work, turn to our own Counsels for supportment; no marvel if we come short of Assistance; *If we will not believe, we shall not be established.*

Look to *Sincerity* in working, and *Faith* in dependance, God's Truth and Fidelity will carry him out to give you unconquerable Supportment: Deflexion from these will be your Destruction. You that are working on a new *Bottom*, work also on new *Principles*; put not new *Wine* into old *Bottles*, new Designs into old Hearts.

Secondly, He is engaged in point of *Honour*; if they miscarry in his way, *What will he do for his great Name?* Yea, so tender is the Lord herein of his Glory,

Glory, that when he hath been exceedingly provoked to remove Men out of his Presence, yet because they have been called by his *Name*, and have visibly held forth a following after *him*, he would not suffer them to be trodden down, lest the Enemy should exalt themselves and say, *Where is now their God?* They shall not take from him the *honour* of former Deliverances and Protections: In such a Nation as this, if the Lord now, upon manifold Provocations, should give up *Parliament, People, Army*, to Calamity and Ruine, would not the *Glory* of former Counsels, Successes, Deliverances, be utterly lost? would not Men say, it was not the Lord, but *Chance* that happened to them?

2. For our *Encouragement*, the ways of God are often-times attended with so many *Difficulties*, so much Opposition, they must be embraced meerly because His; no other *Motive* in the World can suit them to us; I mean, for such as keep them immixed from their own carnal and corrupt Interests: Now because the Lord will not take off the *hardship* and difficulty of them, lest he should not have the *Honour* of carrying on his Work against tumultuating Opposition, he secures poor Weaklings of comfortable *Assistance*, and answerable *Success*, lest his Work should be wholly neglected. It is true, the Lord, as our Sovereign Master, may justly require a close labouring in all his Ways, without the least sweetning, Endearments put upon them, only as they are his whose we are, who hath a *Dominion* over us; But yet as a *tender Father*, in which Relation he delights to exercise his Will towards his own in Christ, *He pitieth our Infirmities, knowing that we are but Dust*: And therefore to invite us into the *Dark*, into ways laboursome and toilsome to Flesh and Blood, he gives us in this

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Security, that we shall be as a *fenced brasen Wall* to the opposing Sons of Men.

Use 1.] To discover the *Vanity* and *Folly* of all Opposition, to Men called forth of God to do his Work, and walking in his Ways: Would you not think him *Mad*, that should strike with his Fist, and run with his Head against a *fenced brasen Wall*, to cast it down? Is he like to have any success but the *battering* of his Flesh, and the *beating* out of his Brains? What do the *Waves* obtain by dashing themselves with noise and dread against a *Rock*, but their own beating to pieces? What prevails a Man by shooting his Arrows against the *Sky*, but a *return* upon his own Head? Nor is the most powerful Opposition to ~~the~~ the Ways of God, like to meet with better Success; God looks no otherwise upon Opposers, than you would do upon a Man attempting to thrust down a *fenced brasen Wall* with his Fingers. Therefore it is said, that in their *proudest Attempts*, *strongest Assaults*, *deepest Counsels*, *Combinations* and *Associations*, *he laughs them to scorn*, derides their Folly, contemns their Fury, lets them sweat in *vain*, until their Day be come, *Psal. 2.* How birthless in our *own*, as other *Generations*, have been their swelling Conceptions? What then is it that prevails upon Men to break through so many Disappointments against the Lord, as they do? Doubtless that of *Isa. 23. 9.* Surely the Lord of Hosts hath a purpose ~~to~~ to stain the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. God gives up Men unto it, that he may leave no Earthly Glory or Honour without Pollution or Contempt: And therefore hath *Opposition* in our Days been turned upon so many Hands, that God might leave no Glory without Contempt: Yet with this difference, that if the Lord will own them, he will recover them from their Opposition, as hath hapned
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of late to the *Ministry* of *one*, and will happen e're long to the *Ministry* of *another* Nation: When the Lord hath a little stain'd the pride of their Glory, they shall be brought home again by the *spirit of judgment and burning*: But if he own them not, they shall perish under the Opposition. And when it hath been *wheeled* about on all sorts of Men, the *End* will be,

Use 2.] *Be wise now therefore, O ye Rulers, be Instructed ye that are Judges of the Earth, serve the Lord with fear, and rejoyce with trembling, Psal. 2. 10, 11. See whence your Assistance cometh; see where lie the hills of your salvation, and say, Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy, Hos. 14. 3. It is God alone who is a Sun and a Shield: his ways do good to the upright in heart. Behold, here is a way to encompass England with a brasen Wall: Let the Rulers of it walk in right Ways, with upright Hearts. Others have been careful to preserve the People to them, and the City to them; Oh, be ye careful to preserve your God unto you, he alone can make you a fenced Wall; if he departs, your Wall departs, your Shade departs. Give me leave to insist a little on one Particular, which I chuse out among many others: When God leads out his People to any great things, the Angel of his presence is still among them: See at large Exod. 23. 20, 21, 22. The Angel of the Covenant, in whom is the Name of God, that hath Power of pardoning or retaining Transgressions, Jesus Christ, the Angel that redeemeth his out of all their troubles, Gen. 48. 16. he is in the midst of them, and amongst them: And God gives this special Caution, if we would have his Assistance, that we should beware of him, and obey him, and provoke him not:*
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Would you then have God's Assistance continued, take heed of provoking *the Angel of his Presence* ; * provoke him not by slighting of his Ways ; provoke him not by contemning his Ordinances ; if you leave him to deal for himself, he will leave you to shift for your selves : What though his Followers are at some difference (the best *knowing but in part*) about the Administration of some things in his Kingdom ; the *Evil* one having also sown some bitter Seeds of Persecution, Strife, Envy, and Contention among them : What though some poor Creatures are captivated by *Satan*, the Prince of Pride, to a contempt of all his *Ordinances*, whose Souls, I hope, the Lord will one day free from the snare of the Devil : Yet I pray give me leave (it is no time to contest, or dispute it) to bear Witness in the behalf of my *Master*, to this one Truth, that, if by your own personal Practice and Observance, your Protection, Countenance, Authority, Laws, you do not *assert, maintain*, uphold the Order of the Gospel, and Administration of the Ordinances of Christ, notwithstanding the noise and clamours of *Novel Fancies*, which, like *Jonah's Gourd*, have *sprung* up in a *Night*, and will *wither in a Day*, you will be forsaken by the Angel of God's Presence, and you will become an *Astonishment* to all the Inhabitants of the Earth : And herein I do not speak as one hesitating or dubious, but *positively assert* it as the known Mind of God, and whereof he will not suffer any long to doubt, *Psal. 2. 12.*

Use 3.] Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not ; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even your God with a recompence, he will come and save you, *Isa. 35. 3, 4.* Let the most weak

* See a Discourse about Toleration.

and fearful, the fainting Heart, the trembling Spirit, and the doubting Mind know, that full and *plenary* Security, *perfect* Peace, attends the Upright in the Ways of God. You that are in God's Way, do God's Work, and take this Cordial for all your Distempers, return not to former provoking Ways, and he will make you a fenced *brasen* Wall.

And so I come to the third thing which I proposed to consider, the Opposition which Men cleaving to the Lord in all his Ways, shall find, with the issue and success of it; *They shall fight against thee, but shall not prevail.*

The Words may be considered either as a *Prediction* depending on God's Prescience of *what will be*, or a *Commination* from his just Judgment of *what shall be*.

In the first Sense, the Lord tells the Prophet, from the Corruption, Apostacy, Stubbornness of that People, *what would come to pass*. In the second, what for their Sins and Provocations, by his just Judgment, *should come to pass*. Time will not allow me to handle the words in both Acceptations; wherefore I shall take up the *latter* only, *viz.* That it is a Commination of *what shall be* for the further Misery of that wretched People; they shall *Judicially* be given up to a fighting against him.

[Obs.] God often-times gives up a sinful People to a fruitless Contention, and fighting with their only Supporters and means of Deliverance. They shall, &c. *Jeremiah* had laboured with God for them, and with them for God, that if possible Peace being made, they might be delivered, and to consummate their Sins, *they are given up to fight against him.*

I cannot now insist upon particular Instances, consult the History of the Church in all Ages, you shall find it continually, upon all occasions, verified; from the *Israelites* opposing *Moses*, to the *Ephraimites* Contest with *Jephthah*, the rejecting of *Samuel*, and so on

on to the *Kings* of the Earth, giving their Power to the *Beast* to wage War with the *Lamb*; with the *Inhabitants* of the World, combining against the *Witnesses* of *Christ*, is this Assertion held out. In following Story, no sooner did any Plague or Judgment break out against the *Roman Empire*, but instantly *Christianos ad Leones*, their Fury must be spent upon them, who were the only Supporters of it from irrecoverable Ruine. Now the Lord doth this,

1. To Seal up a sinful People's Destruction. *Eli's* Sons hearkned not, because the Lord would slay them, 1 *Sam.* 2. 25. When God intends Ruine to a People, they shall walk in ways that tend thereunto: Now, is there a readier way for a Man to have a *House* on his Head, than by pulling away the *Pillars* whereby it is supported? If by *Moses's* standing in the Gap, the Fury of the Lord be turned away; certainly, if the People contend to remove him, their Desolation sleepeth not. When therefore the Lord intends to lay *Cities waste without Inhabitants, and Houses without Men, to make a Land utterly desolate*, the way of its accomplishment is, by by making the hearts of the people fat, and their Ears heavy, and shutting their eyes, that they should not see, and attend to the Means of their Recovery, *Isa.* 6. 10, 11. So gathering in his peace and mercies from a provoking people, *Jer.* 16. 15.

2. To manifest his own Power and Sovereignty in maintaining a small handful, oft-times a few single Persons, a *Moses*, a *Samuel*, two *Witnesses* against the opposing Rage of a hardened Multitude. If those who undertake his Work and Business in their several *Generations*, should have withal the concurrent Obedience and Assistance of others, whose Good is intended, neither would his Name be so seen, nor his Ways so honoured, as now, when he bears them up against all Opposition. Had not the People of this Land been

given up (many of them) to fight against the Deliverers of the Nation, and were it not so with them even at this time, how *dark* would have been the Workings of *Providence*, which now, by wrestling through all Opposition, are so conspicuous and clear! When then a People, or any part of a People, have made themselves *unworthy* of the Good Things, intended to be accomplished by the Instruments of Righteousness and Peace, the Lord will *blow* upon their *Waves*, that with Rage and Fury they shall dash themselves against *them*, whom he will strengthen with the *munition of Rocks*, not to be prevailed against. So that *God's Glory*, and their *own Ruine*, lie at the bottom of this Close-working of Providence, in giving up a *sinful People* to a *fruitless contending* with their own Deliverers, if ever they be delivered.

But, is not a People's contending with the Instruments, by whom God worketh amongst them, and for them, a Sin and Provocation to the Eyes of his Glory? How then can the Lord be said to give them up unto it?

Answ.] Avoiding all *Scholastical Discourses*, as unsuited to the Work of this Day; I shall briefly give in unto you, how this is a *sinful Thing*, yet *Sinners* given up unto it, without the least *extenuation* of their Guilt, or colour for *Charge* on the Justice and Goodness of God.

1. Then, to *give up Men* unto a thing in itself *sinful*, is no more, but so to dispose and order things, that Sinners may exercise and draw out their *sinful Principles* in such a way. This, that the Lord doth, the Scripture is full of *Examples*, and hath Testimonies innumerable: That herein the *Holy one of Israel*, is no ways Co-partner with the *guilt* of the
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Sons of Men, will appear, by observing the difference of these several *Agents*, in these four Things.

1. The *Principle*, by which they work.
2. The *Rule*, by which they proceed.
3. The *Means* which they use.
4. The *End* at which they aim.

1. The *Principle* of Operation in God, is his own *Sovereign Will* and good *Pleasure*. *He doth whatever he pleaseth*, Psal. 115. 3. *He saith his purpose shall stand, and he will do all his PLEASURE*, Isa. 46. 10. *He hath mercy on whom he WILL have mercy, and whom he WILL he hardneth*, Rom. 9. 13. *Giving no account OF HIS MATTERS*, Job 33. 18. This our Saviour rendereth as the only Principle and Reason of his hidden Operations: *O Father, so it seemed good in thy sight*, Matt. 11. 26. His *Sovereignty*, in doing what he will with his own, as the Potter with his Clay, is the rise of his Operations: So that whatever he doth, *who can say unto him, What dost thou?* Job 9. 12. *Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?* Rom. 9. 20. And hence two Things will follow.

1. That what he doth is *Just* and *Righteous*; for so must all *Acts* of *supreme* and *absolute Dominion* be.
2. That he can be *Author* of nothing but what hath *Existence* and *Being* in itself; for he works as the *Fountain* of *Beings*. This *Sin* hath not. So that, though every *Action*, whether good or bad, receives its *specification* from the working of *Providence*, and to that is their *Existence* in their several *Kinds* to be ascribed; yet an evil *Action*, in the *evilness* of it, depends not upon *Divine concurrence* and *influence*; for *Good* and *Evil* make not sundry kinds of *Actions*, but only a di-

stinction of a *Subjeſt* in reſpect of its *Adjuncts* and *Accidents*.

But now the *Principle of Operation* in Man, is *Nature* vitiated and corrupted; I ſay *Nature*: Not that he worketh *naturally*, being a *free Agent*, but that theſe *Faculties*, *Will* and *Understanding*, which are the *Principles of Operation*, are in *Nature* corrupted, and from thence can nothing flow but Evil: *An evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit: Men do not gather figs from thistles: A bitter fountain ſends not forth ſweet waters: Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* If the *Fountain* be poisoned, can the *streams* be whoſome? What can you expect of *Light* and *Truth* from a *Mind* poſſeſſ'd with *Vanity* and *Darkneſs*? What from a *Will* averted from the *chiefeſt Good*, and fixt upon *preſent appearances*? What from an *Heart*, the ſigment of whoſe *Imagination* is only Evil?

2. Conſider the difference in the *Rule of Operation*: Every thing that works, hath a *Rule* to work by: This is called a *Law*. In *that thing* which to man is ſinful, God worketh as it is a *thing* only; Man, as it it is a *ſinful thing*: And how ſo? Why every one's *Sin* is his *Aberration* from his *Rule of Operation*, or *Working*, ἀμαρτάνειν, is *aberrare à ſcopo*. To *ſin*, is not to collime aright at the *End* propoſed; ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία, is a moſt exact *Definition* of it: *Irregularity* is its *Form*, if it may be ſaid to have a *Form*: A *Privation's Form*, is *Deformity*. Look then in any *Action* wherein an *Agent* exorbitates from its *Rule*, that is *Sin*. Now, what is God's *Rule* in *Operation*? His own *infinite wiſe Will* alone; he takes neither *Motive*, *Riſe*, nor *Occaſion* for any *internal Acts*, from any thing without himſelf; he doth whatever he pleaſeth, *Pſal.* 115. 3. He worketh all things according to the *counſel of his own will*, *Ephes.* 1. 11. That is his own *Law*

Law of Operation, and the *Rule* of Righteousness unto others. Working then agreeably to his own Will, which he always must do, he is *free* from the obliquity of any Action. What now is the *Rule* of the Sons of Men? Why the revealed Will of God; *Revealed things belong to us, that we may do them*, Deut. 29. 29. God's *revealed Will* is the Rule of our Walking; our Working; whatever *suits* not, answers not this, is *Evil*. Sin is the transgression of the Law, 1 *John* 3. 4. Here then comes in the *Deformity*, the Obliquity, the *Ataxy* of any thing, God works, and man worketh: Those *Agents* have several Rules. God works according to his *Rule*; hence the Action is Good, as an Action: Man deviates from his *Rule*; hence it is *sinful*, in respect of its Qualifications and Adjuncts. Man writes fair Letters upon wet Paper, and they run all into one Blot; not the *skill* of the Scribe, but the *defect* in the Paper, is the Cause of the Deformity. He that makes a *lame Horse* go, is the Cause of his going; but the defect in his Joynts is the Cause of his going lame. The *Sun* exhales a Steam from the *Dunghill*; the *Sun* is the Cause of the Exhalation, but the *Dunghill* of the unwholesome Savour. The first Cause is the proper Cause of a *Thing's being*, but the second of its *being Evil*.

3. Consider the *several Operations and Actings of God and Man*; for Instance, in a rebellious People's fighting against their Helpers under him.

Now the *Acts* of God herein may be referred to Six Heads.

1. A *continuance* of the Creature's Being and Life, Upholding him by the word of his power, Heb. 1. 3. when he might take him off in a Moment: *Enduring them with much long-suffering*, Rom. 9. 22. when he might cut him off, as he did the Opposers of *Elijah*, with fire from heaven, 2 Kings, 1. 12.

2. A continuance of Power of Operation to them, when he could make their hands to wither, like *Jero-boam's*, when they go about to strike, 1 Kings, 13. 4. or their Hearts to die within them, like *Nabal's*, when they intend to be Churlish, 1 Sam. 25. 37. But he raiseth them up, or makes them to stand, that they may oppose, Rom. 9. 11.

3. Laying before them a suitable Object, for the drawing forth their Corruption unto Opposition; giving them such Helpers, as shall, in many things, cross their Lusts, and exasperate them thereunto; as *Elijah*, a Man of a fiery Zeal, for a luke-warm *Abab*.

4. With-holding from them that effectual Grace, by which alone that Sin might be avoided; a not actually keeping them from that Sin by the might of his Spirit and Grace; that alone is effectual Grace, which is actual; he suffers them to walk in their own Ways.

And this the Lord may do;

First, In respect of them, *Judicially*, they deserve to be forsaken: *Abab* is left to fill up the measure of his Iniquities, add iniquity to iniquity, Psal. 69. 27.

Secondly, In respect of himself, by way of Sovereignty, doing what he will with his own, barden-
ing whom he will, Rom. 9. 15.

5. He positively sends upon their Understandings, that which the Scripture sets out under the terms of *Blindness*, *Darkness*, *Folly*, *Delusion*, *Slumber*, a spirit of *Giddiness*, and the like: The Places are too many to rehearse. What secret *Adings* in and upon the Minds of Men; what disturbing of their Advices; what mingling of corrupt Affections with false carnal Reasonings; what givings up to the Power of Darkness in *Satan*, the Prince thereof, this judicial *Act* doth contain, I cannot insist upon: Let it suffice, God will not help them to discern, yea, he will cause that they shall not discern, but hide from their Eyes the things that

that concern their Peace, and so give them up to contend with their only Helpers.

6. Suitably, upon the *Will and Affections* he hath several Acts; obfirming the one in Corruption, and giving up the other to Vileness, *Rom. 1. 24, 26.* until the *Heart* become thoroughly hardened, and the *Conscience* seared: Not forcing the one, but leaving it to follow the Judgment of practical Reason; which being a *blind*, yea, a *blinded* Guide, whither can it lead a *blind* Follower, but into the Ditch? Not *defiling* the other with infused *Sensuality*, but provoking them to *act* according to inbred native Corruption; and by suffering frequent vile Actings, to confirm them in ways of Vileness.

Take an Instance of the whole; God gives Helpers and Deliverers to a sinful People, because of their Provocations; some, or all of them, shall not taste of the Deliverance by them to be procured: Wherefore, though he sustains their *Lives* in being, whereby they might have opportunity to know his Mind, and their own Peace, yet he gives them a *Power* to contend with their *Helpers*, causing their Helpers to *act such things*, as under consideration of Circumstances, shall exceedingly provoke these Sinners. Being so *exasperated* and provoked, the Lord, who is free in all his Dispensations, refuseth to make out to them that *healing Grace*, whereby they might be kept from a sinful Opposition: Yea, being justly *provoked*, and resolved that they shall not taste of the Plenty to come, he makes them *foolish and giddy* in their Reasonings and Counsels, blinds them in their *Understandings*, that they shall not be able to discern *plain and evident things*, tending to their own Good, but in all their Ways shall *err like a drunken Man in his Vomit*; whence, that they may not be recovered, because he will destroy them, he gives in Hardness and
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Obstinacy upon their Hearts and Spirits, leaving them to *suitable Affections*, to contend for their own Ruine.

Now, what are the *Ways and Methods* of sinful Man's working in such an *Opposition*, would be too long for me to declare; what *Prejudices* are erected, what *Lusts* pursued, what corrupt *Interests* acted and followed; how *Self* is honoured; what false *Pretences* coined; how *God* is slighted; if I should go about to lay open, I must look into the *Hell* of these Times, than which nothing can be more loathsome and abominable: Let it suffice, that sinful *Self*, sinful *Lusts*, sinful *Prejudices*, sinful *Blindness*, sinful carnal *Fears*, sinful corrupt *Interests*, sinful *fleshly Reasonings*, sinful *Passions*, and vile *Affections*, do all concur in such a Work, are all woven up together in such a Web.

4. See the distance of their *Aims*; God's Aim is only the manifestation of his own Glory (than which nothing but himself is so infinitely Good; nothing so Righteous that it should be) and this by the way of Goodness and Severity, *Rom. 11. 22.* Goodness in Faithfulness and Mercy, *preserving* his, who are opposed, whereby his Glory is exceedingly advanced: Severity towards the Opposers, that by a *sinful cursed Opposition*, they may fill up the measure of their Iniquities, and receive this at the Hand of the Lord, that they *lie down in Sorrow*, wherein also he is Glorious.

God forbid, that I should speak *this* of all, that for any Time, or under any *Temptation*, may be carried to an Opposition in any kind or degree, to the *Instruments* of God's Glory amongst them: Many for a Season may do it, and yet belong to God, who shall be recovered in due time: It is only of Men given up, *forsaken*, opposing all the *Appearances* of God with

with his *Saints* and People in all his Ways, of whom I speak.

Now, what are the Ends of this *Generation of Fighters* against this *brazen Wall*, and how distant from those of the Lord's? *They consult to cast them down from his excellency, whom God will exalt, Psal. 62. 4. They think not as the Lord, neither doth their heart mean so, but it is in their heart to destroy and to cut off, Isa. 10. 7.* To satisfy their own corrupt Lusts, *Ambition, Avarice, Revenge, Superstition*, contempt of God's People, because his *hatred* of the Yoke of the LORD, *fleshly Interests*; even for these, and such-like *Ends* as these, is their Undertaking.

Thus, though there be a *concurrence* of God and Man in the same thing, yet considering the distance of their *Principles, Rules, Actions, and Ends*, it is apparent, that *Man* doth *sinfully*, what the *Lord* doth *judicially*: Which being an Answer to the former Objection, I return to give in some *Uses* to the Point.

Use 1.] Let Men, constant, sincere, upright in the Ways of God, especially in *difficult Times*, know what they are to expect from *many*, yea, the *most* of the *Generation*, whose Good they intend, and among whom they live; Opposition and Fighting is like to be their *Lot*; and that not only *it will be so* because of Men's Lusts, Corruptions, Prejudices, but also *it shall be so* from God's righteous Judgments against a stubborn People: *They harden their Hearts, that it may be so*, to compass their Ends; and God hardens their Hearts, that *it shall be so*, to bring about his Aims: *They will do it*, to execute their *Revenge upon others*: *They shall do it*, to execute God's *Vengeance* upon themselves. This may be for Consolation, that in their Contending, there is nothing but the *wrath of man* against them whom they oppose (which
God

God will restrain, or cause it to turn to his Praise;) but there is the *Wrath of God* against themselves, which who can bear? This then let all expect, who engage their *Hearts* to God, and follow the *Lamb* whithersoever he goeth.

Men walking in the *sincerity of their Hearts*, are very apt to conceive, that all *Sheaves* should bowe to theirs; that all Men should cry *Grace, Grace*, to their Proceedings: Why should any oppose? *Quid meruere?* Alas! the more *upright* they are, the fitter for the Lord, by them, to break a Gainfaying People: Let Men keep close to those ways of God where-to Protection is annexed, and let not their Hearts fail them because of the People of the Land; the storm of their Fury will be like the *Plague* of Hail in *Egypt*, it smote only the Cattle that were in the Field; those, who upon the Word of *Moses*, drove them into the Houses, preserved them alive. If Men wander in the *Field* of their own Ways, of Self-seeking, Oppression, Ambition, and the like, doubtless the Storm will carry them away; but for those who keep House, who keep close to the Lord, though it may have much Noise, Terror, and Dread with it, it shall not come nigh them: And if the Lord, for Causes best known, known only to his infinite Wisdom, should take off any *Josiah's* in the Opposition, he will certainly effect two things by it:

1. *To give them Rest and Peace.*

2. *Further his Cause and Truth, by drawing out the Prayers and Appeals of the residue; and this living they valued above their Lives.*

All you then that are the Lord's *Workmen*, be always prepared for a Storm; wonder not that Men see not the *Ways* of the Lord, nor the *Judgments* of our God, many are *blinded*. Admire not, that they will so endlessly engage themselves into fruit-

fruitless Oppositions, they are *hardened*. Be not amazed, that evidence of Truth and Righteousness will not affect them, they are *corrupted*. But this do; *Come and enter into the chambers of GOD, and you shall be safe until this whole indignation be overpast.*

I speak of *All* them, and *only* them who follow the Lord in all his Ways with upright Hearts, and single Minds, if the Lord will have you to be a *Rock* and a *brass Wall* for Men to dash themselves against, and to break in pieces, though the Service be grievous to Flesh and Blood, yet it is *His*, whose you are; be prepared, the Wind blows, a Storm may come.

Use 2.] Let Men set upon *Opposition*, make a diligent Enquiry, whether there be no *Hand* in the Business but their own? Whether their Counsels be not *leavened* with the Wrath of God, and their Thoughts *mixed* with a spirit of Giddiness, and themselves carried on to their own Destruction? Let me see the *Opposer* of the present Ways of God, who upon his Opposition is made more *Humble*, more *Self-denying*, more empty of *Self-Wisdom*, more *fervent* in Supplications and waiting upon God than formerly, and I will certainly blot him out of the Roll of Men judicially hardened: But if therewith Men become also *proud, selfish, carnally wise, revengeful, furious upon earthly Interests, full, impatient*, doubtless God is departed, and an evil Spirit from the Lord prevaieth on them. O that Men *would look about them* before it be too late, see the Lord disturbing them, before the Waves return upon them; know that they may pull down some *Anticks* that make a great shew of supporting the Church, and yet indeed are *Pargetted Posts* supported by it; the Foundation is on a *Rock* that shall not be prevailed against.

Use 3.] See the infinite *Wisdom and Sovereignty* of Almighty God, that is able to bring *Light* out of *Darkness*, and to compass his own *righteous Judgments*, by the sinful *Advifings and Undertakings* of Men. Indeed the Lord's *Sovereignty and Dominion* over the Creature, doth not in any thing more exalt it self, than in working in all the *Reasonings, Debates, Consultations* of Men, to bring about his own *Counsels* through their free *Workings*. That Men should use, improve their *Wisdom, Freedom, Choice*, yea, *Lusts*, not once thinking of God; yet all that while do his Work more than their own: *This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.*

Of the last part of my Text I shall not speak at all, neither indeed did I intend.

